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AUTHOR Webster, William E.; Luehe, Bill
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ABSTRACT

For principals leading site-based structuring and improvement efforts, strategic planning is an important tool. Strategic planning melds short-term and long-term planning models and considers outside variables and school resources. Teaching staff, community members, district office personnel, and consultants all have essential roles in strategic planning. Additionally, strategic planning provides structure for accountability in school change and reform. Many reform efforts have failed largely because they did not utilize effective planning mechanisms. For principals, it is best to seek district wide support for strategic planning. Also, teachers, administrators, and others involved should attend strategic planning training sessions. Individual strategies and preventive action must be taken to limit resistance to strategic planning. Committees are the basic means for site-level strategic planning. An Organizational Status Report that includes data inventories of the school, staff, and community is the committee's first task. Next, a brief mission statement should be drafted defining where the school is and where it is headed. Broad goals and objectives, the means to achieve goals, should then be formulated. With goals and objectives set, specific activities can be planned. Finally, a monitoring system should be established. All parties should be familiar with the plan prior to implementation, and changes should be expected. (Contains 12 references.) (JPT)

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#9 The Principal and Strategic Planning

by William E. Webster
and Bill Luehe

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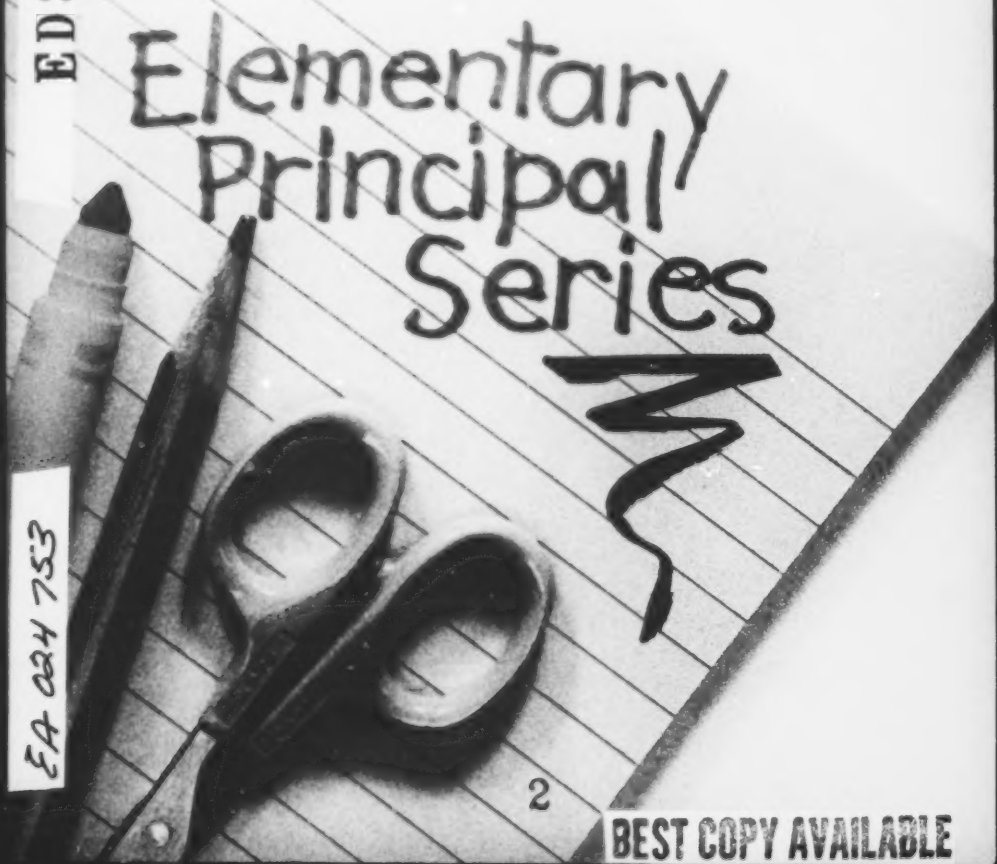

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Elementary Principal Series No. 9

The Principal and Strategic Planning

by
William E. Webster
Professor of Educational Administration
California State University, Bakersfield

and

Bill Luehe
Superintendent
Beardsley School District
Bakersfield, California

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Bloomington, Indiana

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Introduction

Strategic planning is an essential tool for those who lead site-based restructuring and improvement efforts. Such efforts place new demands on principals, calling for a more sophisticated approach to planning than most have ever had to do. We have written this booklet on strategic planning for the Phi Delta Kappa *Elementary Principal Series* to assist principals, particularly new ones, who may be called upon to lead site-based reform efforts.

This booklet is based on the literature, our own experience, and conversations with scores of educators who have had leadership roles in school improvement programs. We have tried to write in a straightforward, jargon-free manner, distilling what we feel to be the most important elements of the strategic planning process. By reading this booklet, busy principals will become familiar enough with the process to be able to guide their staffs and community in the planning necessary for successful school reform.

For those interested in expanding their knowledge in this important area of school management, we include a bibliography of those sources we found most useful in preparing this document.

What Is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is a recent development in education. And like so many planning models, it has been adapted from the business world. Of course, planning in one form or another has been around for as long as human beings have lived in communities. Nomadic tribes had to plan their movements in terms of climatic conditions and the location of hunting grounds; construction of the transcontinental railroad in the 19th century required careful planning of human and material resources; successful military campaigns throughout history have used strategic planning.

Only in the last two decades, largely through state and federal initiatives, has planning emerged as a major change strategy at the school-site level. During this time, planning has fallen under such rubrics as Programmed Planning and Budgeting Systems, Management by Objectives, Minimum Competency Attainment, State Curriculum Standards, and Zero-Based Budgeting, to name a few. These planning models have not always delivered the school improvements their proponents had hoped for. As a result, many practitioners have become skeptical about the efficacy of such models. We believe there is an effective planning process, involving key players in the school, that can expedite any improvement program a school chooses to launch. It is called strategic planning.

Strategic Planning Defined

"Strategic planning," as a term, has largely replaced use of the terms "long-range planning" and "short-range planning." Strategic planning is seen as a pragmatic blending of these two terms but with a focus on the future, say from six months to five years. As might be expected, writers have defined strategic planning in various ways with slightly different emphases. We would define strategic planning as a process that assesses "outside" variables and plays that assessment

against the "inside" resources of a school to create a new course of action designed to achieve specific improvement goals.

A strategic plan, then, is a group of strategies for school change and improvement. A strategic plan looks at how current decisions will affect the future. For example, if a school is considering adopting a new reading program, it raises such questions as: Will children be reading better as a result of our new reading program? If we introduce a new reading program, what inservice training will we need? How will we inform the parents? Another example, if the board of education is considering the implementation of a year-round school, it raises such questions as: What impact will it have on our community? What strategies should we employ to convince parents about the merits of a year-round school? What modifications might be necessary in our existing physical facilities? What new and different roles will emerge for classroom teachers under this program?

Who Should Be Involved in Strategic Planning?

With the increasing emphasis on site-based management and teacher decision making, we believe that strategic planning provides a way to involve teachers and other key constituencies in designing improvement activities at the school-site level. If you are committed to using strategic planning at your school, you will need the involvement of the following constituencies.

Teaching Staff. A basic principle of strategic planning is that planners should be doers and doers should be planners. In the past when central office staff developed plans and forwarded them to the school site for implementation, either nothing happened or what did happen was not done in the way the central office intended. Therefore, it is essential that you involve classroom teachers in the planning effort from the outset.

In small schools this may mean involving every teacher. In larger schools it means setting up a structure that will in one way or another involve and keep everyone informed of the planning process. If a new primary language arts curriculum is to be implemented, all primary teachers have to feel they have a stake in it. If the new curriculum is to work with non-English-speaking children, for example, the primary teachers are the ones to consult about possible modifications in the original plan.

If involvement in planning is a new experience for teachers in your school, one of your first tasks will be to persuade them that their involvement is important. It is understandable that teachers will want

to know why they should be involved in the planning process since it takes time away from their lesson planning, paper correcting, and other important activities that directly affect children. They may not see this level of planning as essential to their day-to-day work. Thus teachers and other staff members may have to be convinced that, indeed, planning is important.

Community. Parents and key community members are increasingly more sophisticated about school matters related to schedule changes, management strategies, and new curriculum offerings. To start planning a year-round school without involving parents almost guarantees opposition if not open hostility. Planned changes in such a basic program as primary reading without parent involvement and support can quickly lead to misunderstanding and opposition.

District Office Personnel. A good planning process at the school-site level requires time and some funds. District office approval no doubt will be necessary if you want to bring in substitutes so teachers can be released for planning meetings during school time. District funds may be needed for consultants and for compensating teachers who work on weekends or during the summer. It is essential, then, that you maintain continuing communication with district office personnel if your planning process departs significantly from standard district policy.

Consultants. Once you have district office approval and financial support, you will need to determine whether it would be helpful to use a consultant to assist you and your staff in the strategic planning process. Using a consultant has the advantage of having an "expert" on your team. This person can help to solidify your school's commitment to try strategic planning, to educate the staff in the process, and then to assist you in implementing the plan.

Why Do You Need Strategic Planning?

It is difficult to pick up a newspaper or magazine these days without reading some account deploring the current state of public education. The recent book, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* by John Chubb and Terry Moe, has received enormous publicity. The authors level blast after blast calling for a total revamping of the system of public education in the United States. They argue that the numerous reports by blue-ribbon committees in the Eighties calling for substantive change in the schools only led to an intensification of what was already being done. In his recent book, *We Must Take Charge*, Chester E. Finn Jr. reinforces the view of Chubb and Moe that the reforms of the Eighties were less than effective; he also calls for dramatic educational restructuring.

To a certain extent we agree with these three writers and are convinced that much of the failure to implement real and permanent change can be attributed to the absence of strategic planning. Implicit in the strategic planning process is a commitment to change, restructure, and improve. Through the strategic planning process, rational decisions will emerge that are based on sound data and thoughtful analysis. A completed plan with its mission statement and goals and objectives communicates to all concerned what direction the school will take.

At a time when school accountability appears to be a national priority, a well-designed strategic plan establishes a structure for accountability. During the planning process you will establish goals, assign individuals to carry out the goals, design programs, set time lines, and develop ways to assess the goals.

Having teachers participate in the planning process assures them that they have an element of control over the factors that impinge on their work in the classroom. By participating in strategic planning, teachers become involved in such decisions as purchasing new instructional materials and computers or allocating funds for their

own inservice programs – all decisions that are directly related to what they do in the classroom.

Strategic planning helps to ensure that your school is meeting the educational needs of students. It provides a systematic way for analyzing the school and its community and then setting directions and allocating resources. Through strategic planning, school officials can knowledgeably project the kinds of educational programs that will be needed next year, in three years, in five years.

Because financial resources allocated to education in most states are inadequate, it is essential that available resources be used in the most efficient and effective ways. Strategic planning provides a method for administrators, teachers, and parents to work together and come up with realistic solutions to local problems.

Many reform efforts in the past have not delivered the changes or products they promised. Innovations such as the ungraded primary, open-space classrooms, modular scheduling, and various curriculum projects have come and gone leaving no lasting imprint on schools across the country. Why have they failed?

We believe the single most important reason is that planners have not been implementers, and implementers seldom have been involved in the planning process. Teachers, if involved at all, are expected to spend time planning after working with children all day long. Typically, the resources allocated to planning are inadequate. Often local planning efforts are sidetracked because a new fad catches someone's fancy and the bandwagon effect propels a school or district to hastily implement the idea without adequate preparation. Or the lure of state or federal funding monopolizes the time and energy of staff in competing for funds designated for programs in which local school leaders have had no input. Still another failure of planning is when stated goals are unrealistic. Thus when implementation does not live up to the promises, the result is frustration, a sense of futility, and a reluctance to try again.

By contrast, strategic planning does not focus on some nebulous goals to be accomplished five years in the future. It focuses on conditions within the school and the community as they exist today. It establishes a framework for analyzing these conditions and identifies those things the school is doing to deal with them. Through strategic planning, educators can analyze the immediate past to see how the school arrived at its present state and predict where the school may be in the future. And it is a vehicle through which teachers and administrators can ask: Are we satisfied with what we are doing now?

If we continue to operate as we have in the past, will it take us where we want to be?

To illustrate, suppose two years ago there was no evidence of a gang culture in your school. Last year some signs of gang activity began to appear, and this year gang-related incidents seemed to be on the increase. If this trend continues, what will your school be like next year and the year after? Will you and your faculty be satisfied with those conditions? And, if not, what can you begin to do now to address the issue?

Another illustration: Suppose your school board has approved phasing in a year-round education program. When will the phase-in begin? How will this change what you currently are doing? If you expect to go on a year-round schedule two years from now, what will the school look like in three or four years? What decisions should you be making now to have the kind of school you believe you should have in four years? What will be the expectations as a result of these changes?

Strategic planning is based on the premise that each decision is purposely linked to the next, and that the future, whether it be six months or five years away, is influenced by actions taken today. If the school adopts a writing-across-the-curriculum program, how will this affect math, science, industrial arts, and home economics teachers? What inservice education will be needed? What changes will teachers be making in their classroom strategies? Will the quality of student writing be improved? How will it be measured?

The essence of strategic planning, then, is understanding the linkage between decisions made, actions taken, and the impact of these actions on future conditions.

Support for Strategic Planning

The success of strategic planning will depend on the commitment that you and your co-workers make to the process and the support you have from the community. Although you may be ready to devote your time and energy, remember that it is the cooperative effort of all involved who will make it a reality.

For your site-based strategic planning efforts to succeed, it behooves you to enlist the support of the district office staff and the board of education. One of the lessons learned during the school restructuring efforts of the Eighties was that such site-based efforts as staff development, the Effective Schools model, and teacher accountability fell short of their promise because of limited involvement and inadequate support from the superintendent and board.

The best scenario is that the superintendent and board will encourage strategic planning districtwide. With this kind of support, your job will be much easier. In any case, your school plan should mesh with the district plan as well as with its mission statement. If strategic planning is to bring about change at your school and in the district, it is important that your school and the district are working in concert.

In the event that strategic planning is only a site-level initiative, you still will have to keep key central office staff and the board informed about both the plan and whatever changes will be implemented. Central office administrators and board members do not take kindly to reading local newspaper articles about new programs in their schools about which they are not aware.

Leadership at the site level must have a thorough understanding of the principles undergirding strategic planning. The central office can help here by providing funds for site-level leadership to attend strategic planning training sessions either at the district level or at a nearby university. At these sessions, teachers and administrators from schools where strategic planning has been implemented can make presentations. Where feasible, staff, parents, and other interested com-

munity members should attend these sessions as well as visit schools that have engaged in strategic planning.

Through these activities, key personnel will learn that: 1) strategic planning focuses on strategies for educational improvement and change; 2) successful change calls for a high level of involvement by those responsible for implementing the change; 3) the leadership team is responsible for communicating the planned changes to all participating in the effort or affected by it.

A classic example of changes being implemented from the top without involvement and proper communication was the so-called modern math movement. Particularly at the elementary school level, teachers were not prepared to teach the new concepts and parents were not informed about the changes. Although vestiges of modern math remain, its major thrust of introducing mathematicians' theoretical concepts has long since disappeared from the classroom.

Besides helping teachers to understand the strategic planning process, school-site leadership must spend time with teacher union representatives and parent groups to discuss the implications of strategic planning, which could mean substantive changes in the management of the school and the nature of instructional programs. Failure to involve staff and community from the beginning of the strategic planning effort can result in major problems.

For example, the authors know of a school district that recently abandoned its plan to establish a year-round school program. After the fact, when the district leadership analyzed the faculty and community objections, they realized that they could have avoided or overcome most of the objections if they had involved these groups in the planning of this major school-reorganization effort. In another district the implementation of a highly touted school choice plan resulted in a major fiscal crisis for the school district. The planning process apparently did not take into consideration the financial implications of the changes being made. When problems such as this district encountered are aired in the media, the public is likely to question the competence of those running the schools. These kinds of difficulties point out the need for strategic planning before launching major changes.

Dealing with Resistance

Most change efforts will meet with some resistance. Teachers will say, "I've been teaching reading (or arithmetic) this way for years, and I feel I've been successful. Why should I have to change now?"

Or parents will ask, "Why do you want to change the school organization? My older children did well at this school the way it has been organized for years."

The first step in dealing with resistance is to accept that it is inevitable. But rather than just stew about it, you and your leadership team should develop individual strategies for each manifestation of resistance that occurs. This might involve personal contacts with resisters to explain the purpose of the planned changes, the use of outside authorities as speakers on behalf of the changes, or visits to nearby schools or districts that have already implemented the changes.

During the period prior to beginning the strategic planning process, you and your team must be alert to signs of resistance. For example, teachers might resist if they feel that their involvement in the planning process will infringe on their instructional time with children. To ensure that this does not happen, you must provide for released time and substitutes as well as time during the summer, for which teachers must be compensated.

If it becomes evident that substantive changes may be needed in key programs such as reading and language arts, you must assure teachers that implementation will be phased in gradually, that appropriate staff development will be provided, and that adequate resources for new curriculum materials will be available. In short, no new demands should be imposed for which there is not adequate support.

If the proposed changes are pre-ordained, such as a state or district mandate, then the strategic planning process can be the means for carrying out the mandate at the site level. Because involvement is indigenous to strategic planning, it is likely that any staff resistance can be overcome through the planning process.

Structure of the Strategic Planning Process

The basic structure for site-level strategic planning is a committee involving key players in the school and community. In a large school the committee would consist of representatives of teachers and parents. In a smaller school, the whole staff can be a committee of the whole.

During its initial sessions, the committee should develop working guidelines and set time lines for the completion of certain tasks. If a consultant is to be used, the committee and the consultant should meet to ensure that both understand each other's roles. Also, the roles of parents and other community members have to be specified and agreed on. This is particularly important in those school districts where parent participation in site-level decision making has been mandated by board policy or legislative action.

For those staff not directly involved with committee work, channels must be established for keeping them informed of the planning process and for giving them an opportunity to react. Through bulletins, faculty meetings, and inservice days, the goals, objectives, and possible program changes emerging from the strategic planning efforts can be presented and discussed.

The Organizational Status Report

Once the committee is organized and has become comfortable with the planning process, its first task is to conduct internal and external environmental scans. Essentially, these are data inventories of the school and its staff (internal) and the community the school serves (external). The outcome of this effort is what we call the Organizational Status Report (OSR), which will serve as a major database for making informed decisions during the planning process. The OSR thus becomes a profile of the school as a whole, including those special characteristics and traditions that may be affected by changes

being considered. To make the OSR a useful working document, the data must be accurate and up to date.

Internal scanning would include staff profiles covering their training and experience, student socioeconomic and ethnic data, student test scores, attendance rates over time, enrollment trends, program changes in the recent and distant past, current curriculum emphasis, budgetary resources, parent involvement and rapport, community support, problems with drugs, gangs, vandalism, etc., and condition of the physical facilities.

External scanning would look at the community to see how it is changing demographically, economically, and socially. Is it becoming more urbanized? Are more people buying homes? Is the population getting older? Is one or more ethnic groups increasing? Is new industry coming into the community? Are school-business partnerships operating in the community? What are projected levels of state and federal funding? What state and federal mandates affect the school's operation? Is there close cooperation between local law enforcement and social-service agencies and the school? Having these kinds of data available for review and analysis is essential when launching a strategic planning effort.

For instance, planning a change, such as introducing a new drug-education program, will give the OSR a specific focus. The data assembled can be used to answer such questions as:

1. Are drugs a current problem in the school?
2. Where would such a program fit into the curriculum?
3. Is staff prepared to handle such a program?
4. What resources will we need to implement the program and where will they come from?

By using the OSR data, the staff can make informed judgments about the school today with projections for the future, the strengths and weaknesses of the school organization, personnel capabilities, demographic changes affecting the school, community and business support, problem areas, resources available and needed, and areas of resistance.

On the next page is a suggested format for an OSR, which can be adapted to local conditions:

Organizational Status Report

Staff Profile:

Student Profile:

Demographic Data:

Major Organizational Strengths:

Major Issues or Problems:

Resources:

Creating Your Strategic Plan

To begin your strategic planning, you and your key planners should have done the following:

1. Made sure that staff and others to be involved in your site-level strategic planning are thoroughly familiar with the characteristics of the school – its staff, students, and program.
2. Identified those factors in the community that impinge on the school.
3. Seen to it that those involved in the planning understand their roles and agree to support the process.
4. Gotten the central office administration's support and the necessary resources to carry out the strategic planning.
5. Seen to it that the planning team has identified, addressed, and overcome most of the potential sources of resistance.
6. Made arrangements for those involved in or affected by the planning to review the OSR and to confirm that the data assembled in it are accurate and current and can serve as a basis on which to develop the strategic plan.

The Mission Statement

The first step in developing your strategic plan is writing a mission statement. Since each school is different, this statement must be drafted to express the uniqueness of the school as reflected in the OSR. Where appropriate, it also should fall within the scope of the district's mission statement.

A good mission statement is brief and straightforward, reflecting where the school is now and where the staff wants it to go. It is an expression of common purposes, the needs to which the organization intends to address itself. A mission statement is results-oriented and serves as a basis for measuring achievement of stated goals. Decisions and actions resulting from strategic planning will be judged on their consistency with the mission statement.

The process of developing the mission statement is an important activity in itself. Drafting a mission statement gives staff and community members an opportunity to reflect on their deeply held values and then to put them into words that capture those values. Working on the mission statement is an energizing, unifying, and direction-setting activity.

The group developing the mission statement communicates with all the staff and key community people on a continuing basis to get reactions and then incorporate them into the statement. This kind of involvement with staff and community will ensure understanding and commitment to the mission by all stakeholders involved in the life of the school.

Sometimes teachers may regard the development of a mission statement with some cynicism. They may feel it has nothing to do with what they are doing with children in their classrooms. A function of the leadership team is to help them understand that developing a mission statement is no idle exercise but rather a means of establishing the direction and climate for the decisions to be made relative to the programs that will be implemented.

Goals and Objectives

After the mission statement has been communicated to all involved and consensus is reached, the next step for the planning team is to develop specific goals and objectives to carry out the mission. This step follows the same careful process used in developing the mission statement.

Goals are broad, general statements of desired outcomes expressed in brief and simple language. Goals provide a focus for both planners and implementers. In strategic planning it is important to express goals in terms of end results. Goals have to be achievable. They must be challenging enough to stretch the organization but not so daunting as to discourage people. Overambitious goals run the risk of being ignored or of setting the stage for failure.

Developed along with goals are objectives, the means to be used to accomplish the goals. Usually there will be several objectives for each goal. As with goals, objectives should be stated clearly, simply, and in a standard format. Each objective should be related to one or more of the goals. They should be challenging yet achievable and measurable.

A statement of an objective has four parts: 1) something to be accomplished, 2) a level of proficiency to achieve, 3) a means of measuring the level of proficiency, and 4) a time line for achieving the

objective. Objectives may be short-range or long-range. Short-range objectives usually are those to be accomplished within a year.

Setting standards for achieving an objective should not be too precise. For example, if an objective is stated that the number of students passing an eighth-grade proficiency exam will increase from 70% to 90% and the increase only reaches 83%, then it could be interpreted that the effort was unsuccessful despite the significant improvement. A better way to state the objective is simply to say that a substantially greater number of students will pass the proficiency exam. Another example is a school district that had as an objective increasing the number of students taking college preparatory courses. This district did not state a precise figure for indicating achievement of that objective. When in a two-year period the district could show that the number taking college prep courses had increased by slightly more than 50%, there was a real sense of accomplishment and success. By stating objectives in terms of improvement rather than giving a precise statistic, you avoid creating misunderstanding with the public and a feeling of failure by those responsible for implementing the program.

Activities

With goals and objectives set, the planning team is then ready to design specific activities that address each objective. If the objective is the establishment of a new language arts program, each activity in carrying out the objective is included in the plan; for example, purchase of materials, inservice training, and communicating with parents. The team also designates those people responsible for carrying out each activity, establishes a time line or check points, estimates the costs, and specifies the source of funds. For a more ambitious objective, such as implementing a school choice program or a year-round school, the planning document would be much more complex and lengthy because of all the components involved.

During this activity-designing process, the planning team must make sure that the activities are realistic and doable. One of the major problems with the ill-fated Programmed Planning and Budgeting Systems (PPBS) was that the planners often got so enamored with the process that they failed to take into account the workloads of those expected to implement their grandiose plans. Therefore, it is essential for the planning team to keep all stakeholders – teachers, parents, community members – apprised of each step in the plan and to give them a chance to react.

Monitoring System

Those who design the plan and those who implement it or are affected by it should realize that goals and objectives are essentially a statement of what will be accomplished if everything proceeds according to plan. In the real world, however, few things ever proceed precisely as planned. Therefore, it is important to have a built-in monitoring system to identify problems, glitches, and other untoward events that might require modifications of the plan.

The original planning committee is a logical group to serve as the monitoring team. The time lines built into the plan serve as check points. As these dates approach on the calendar, the monitoring team checks to make sure that the plan is on track; and if changes are called for, they are made in a timely manner.

A suggested format for reporting a strategic planning effort is shown on the next page.

Guidelines for Strategic Planning

In way of summary, we offer the following guidelines for strategic planning:

- Keep the process simple.
- Minimize paperwork.
- Show teachers how the plan benefits them in terms of classroom instruction.
- Involve in the planning process as many as possible of those who will be affected by the plan.
- Establish a communication system for keeping everyone informed of progress and for getting feedback.
- Build a monitoring system into the plan.
- Make goals, objectives, and activities challenging but realistic and achievable.
- Allow for flexibility when the unexpected occurs or when monitoring indicates a change is needed.
- While recognizing the importance of the planning process, keep the focus on the actions recommended.
- Keep your sensors out for possible resistance.

Mission Statement

Goals	Objectives	Activity	Person Responsible	Date/Funds

Implementing the Plan

The completed plan should be reproduced in sufficient copies to be shared with board members, central office staff, parents, community leaders, and the entire building staff. The document should carry an introduction in which you briefly explain the process that led to its development and an acknowledgement of the staff's and community's contributions to and support for the plan. Also make clear that, as the plan is implemented, it will be carefully monitored; and if changes are needed, you will keep all key people informed of them.

Each year as the plan is updated, it should be reproduced and distributed to the appropriate constituencies. The annual update is the time to highlight accomplishments of the previous year. Where there have been changes, these should be noted along with a rationale for the changes. The annual update, in effect, becomes an accountability document.

As the staff undertake their various activities according to the established time lines, there should be opportunities at grade-level meetings or faculty meetings for discussion and reflection on the progress made in implementing the plan. You or a member of the planning team also can call attention to the accomplishment of key activities in the plan. For example, at the end of a year-long, schoolwide discipline effort, if graffiti and the number of discipline referrals to the principal have been substantially reduced, the staff will have confidence in the plan and the momentum for change will continue. The confidence emerging from sound planning and effective implementation should enable the staff to develop more ambitious goals and objectives in the future. Once they know they have the ability to succeed, they should be willing to make greater demands on themselves and the system.

Course Changes

As mentioned earlier, the unexpected can occur when implementing any plan. For example, the authors know of a school that planned

an experimental program in which eighth-grade students would take a year-long pre-algebra course using computers and a smaller class size. The intent of the course was to prepare students for high school algebra in the ninth grade. The course exceeded expectations; the students were prepared for algebra at the end of the first semester. This positive development required an unexpected purchase of algebra texts as well as providing for summer school to allow students to complete the high school algebra course prior to entering the ninth grade. These changes required reallocation of resources, scheduling changes, and the hiring of additional summer school teachers, none of which had been anticipated.

Another example of unexpected course changes occurred recently in California. Funding for the state's Teacher Mentor Program was deleted from the governor's budget, which usually signals funding termination. As a result, school districts cancelled summer inservice plans and readjusted teaching loads to compensate for cancellation of the Teacher Mentor Program. In a last-minute compromise with the legislature, the governor agreed to restore funding; thus it became necessary to change plans once more and to reassign teachers and gear up for summer inservice training.

Our point is simply this: No plan is set in stone, to be implemented without any modifications. Changes can and probably will occur. Part of an effective strategic planning process is to monitor the implementation of the plan and to be prepared to modify it when unexpected developments occur.

If, for whatever reason, there have been problems or delays requiring modifications or changes in the plan, these should be discussed openly but in such a way that staff do not feel guilty for failing to implement the plan as originally conceived.

Is Strategic Planning for You?

As you have worked your way through this booklet, you may have asked yourself, "Is it worth it?" Take a moment to respond to the questions below. If your answers are mostly positive, you are prepared to launch a strategic planning effort at your school.

1. Do you feel the need for a planning process that will allow you and your staff to envision your school's future and to develop and implement a program to achieve that future?
2. Do you want to be a central player in deciding where your school will be five years from now or would you rather leave it to happenstance?
3. Do you feel that it is important to identify those things most valued about your school and the way that it operates?
4. Do you feel that your school should respond to a changing environment?
5. Would you like to know what threatens the future well-being of your school?
6. Do you know how best to align the resources in your community to benefit your school?
7. Do you feel it is important for you to be aware of the critical issues facing your school?
8. Are you seeking an effective way to make your staff a cohesive unit, working together for common goals?
9. Do you feel you can generate sufficient support from your staff to launch the effort?
10. Do you believe you can get community support for a planned change/reform effort?
11. Do you currently have a strategy for judiciously allocating your school's resources?
12. Do you currently make maximum use of existing human resources?
13. Do you feel that your school really needs to improve how it educates young people?

14. Are you prepared to take the risks that a strategic planning effort will present?

15. Do you know how to deal with resistance to change?

Your positive responses to the above questions should leave little doubt that strategic planning is a tool that you, your staff, and your community can use to enable your school to reach its maximum potential. Specifically, strategic planning will help you to:

- clarify the future direction your school should take,
- establish priorities,
- make today's decisions in light of their future consequences,
- define specific processes for decision making,
- improve organizational performance,
- deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances,
- build teamwork and expertise,
- maximize your staff's potential,
- make the best use of limited resources.

For you personally, the use of strategic planning not only will provide a tool to plan effectively for your school's future, but, more important, it will develop your ability to think and act strategically.

Good luck!

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Phi Delta Kappa
P.O. Box 789
Bloomington, IN 47402-0789